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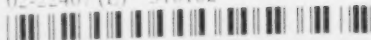
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle in a globalizing world

Statement submitted by the Women's National Commission, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2002/1



Eradicating poverty, including through the empowerment of women throughout their life cycle in a globalizing world

The Women's National Commission (WNC) is the UK Government's independent advisory body on women. The WNC has 222 partner organisations and represents several million women throughout the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Women's National Commission is pleased that the Commission on the Status of Women is focusing global attention on the eradication of poverty through the empowerment of women at its 46th session.

In the United Kingdom we are concerned about the growing disparity between the rich and the poor. This disparity has a detrimental impact upon women, many of whom face compounded discrimination of gender, race and age.

We believe that those in positions of authority and influence have a responsibility to understand the nature of poverty, its causes, and its gender dimension. Poverty is not solely about income; women often suffer from a lack of other resources, such as information, which often leads to social exclusion and generates poor health.

Low Pay. Many women work in low paid jobs, and even when doing the same jobs frequently earn less than their male counterparts. Governments have a responsibility to ensure that they put in place provisions to allow all members of society to have access to a minimum income and equal pay. Such an income should be set at the level necessary to maintain the health and well-being of children, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

Pensions. We are concerned about the poverty faced by women when they reach pensionable age. Governments must provide adequate pension provision for women, especially those who remain at home in a "caring" role during their working life. Women earn less over their lifetimes than men, lose income by taking years out to raise children and care for elderly and disabled relatives and partners. They are often faced with poverty after the death of a partner. Governments must ensure that the correct policies are in place to support women through these difficult years.

Education. Governments and religious leaders need to provide girls and women with access to all forms of education throughout their lives, in order to equip them with the necessary social and economic skills to allow them to play a full and inclusive part in today's society, and to access their fair share of society's wealth. Governments need to ensure that developmental and gender differences, and the needs of girls, are built into teacher training. Governments must also make a firm commitment to ensure that equality is promoted in education and careers advice, for example, through the promotion of non-stereotypical careers.

Health. Good health is an essential element in the elimination of poverty, this is especially important with regard to the reproductive health of women. Women need to be empowered to be able to control their own fertility and to make the choices that are appropriate for their circumstances. Governments should provide women with the education and resources needed. The United Kingdom has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in Europe and this has direct links with poverty and social exclusion – both cause and effect. Governments must work with civil society, NGOs and faith communities to develop strategies and policies aimed at reducing the number of teenage pregnancies and school age mothers.

We ask Governments to address, as a matter of urgency, the gender dimension of poverty, and ask that they ensure that the needs of **all** women, be they married, single, widows, immigrants, asylum seekers, or trafficked women, are heard and heeded in the formulation and implementation of strategies and policies relating to women.